

Development Committee

Wednesday, 20th September, 2006

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCausland (Chairman);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors Convery, Crozier, D. Dodds, Ekin, Empey,
Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Long, Maginness, A. Maskey,
P. Maskey, McGimpsey, Newton, Ní Chuilín and Stoker.

Also attended: Councillors Cobain, Ervine, Mullaghan and Rodgers.

In attendance: Ms. M. T. McGivern, Director of Development;
Ms. S. Wylie, Head of Urban Development; and
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors M. Browne and Hartley.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th September.

Arts Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meetings of the Arts Sub-Committee of 6th and 11th September were approved and adopted.

Economic Development Sub-Committee

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 6th September.

Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee

Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee of 13th September be approved and adopted.

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

The Director of Development informed the Members that, subsequent to the meeting of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee on 13th September, correspondence had been received from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee indicating that it would be prepared to receive a deputation from the Council during its visit to the Province on 16th October when it would be examining the benefits of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy. She recommended that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee, together with relevant officers and representatives from the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, attend the meeting with the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on 16th October and that such attendance be considered as an approved duty.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Position of Head of Urban Development

The Director of Development informed the Committee that, due to personal circumstances, the person who had been appointed recently to the position of Head of Urban Development had been unable to fulfil the duties of the post. Accordingly, the reserve candidate, Ms. Suzanne Wylie, had been appointed to the position.

The Committee noted the information provided and the Chairman welcomed Ms. Wylie to her first meeting.

Ports Policy Consultation Document

The Committee considered a report regarding the Ports Policy Consultation Document, a copy of which, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Relevant Background Information

Members may be aware that in June 2006 DRD published a consultation paper dealing with the issues of the Trust Ports in Northern Ireland (NI). This separate NI review was introduced in the context of a wider ‘UK Port’s Policy Review’.

In response to the consultation document, ‘Ports Policy – your views invited’ ‘Powers, status and governance of Public Trust Ports in NI’, the Development Department has put together a comprehensive consultation response (Appendix 1.1).

Key Issues

Belfast City Council found the consultation paper released by DRD informative, but focussing on specific issues rather than the more important issue of Ports as a key driver to the regions economic success. It was therefore decided not to directly answer the specific questions detailed within the consultation paper, but to alternatively respond in a more strategic manner in order to reiterate and reaffirm Belfast City Council’s position.

The Port of Belfast is currently: -

- Classified as a Public Corporation;
- Expected to observe the code of practice published by DRD;
- Abides by specific conditions set out by the Belfast Harbour Order (NI) 2002 and the Harbours (NI) Order 2002.

It is clear that Belfast Trust Port would like to be free from the control and restrictions imposed upon them by the current legislation framework. The Port of Belfast is a vital gateway for raw materials, exports and consumer goods for the entire island, it has contributed £34m in tax to the Exchequer, plus £11m in rates paid by the Port and Port users every year.

The Port is also NI's leading logistics and distribution hub, and is a major generator of employment in NI.

The Belfast Port plays a crucial role in the NI economy that requires an efficient port infrastructure. Imposing the constraints of Public Corporation Status upon Belfast Trust Port, could establish obstacles to the ability of effectively meeting the economy's needs. It is considered that the interest of NI and the future of the Port of Belfast would be best served by a governance structure that retains the Trust Status of the Port with the potential for extended powers.

Given the importance of the Port to the economic well-being of the region in terms of job and wealth creation it is vitally important that the Port remains within the public domain.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the content of the attached consultation response and agree to the recommendations contained within, which reaffirm and reiterate Belfast City Council's position of:

- Retaining Belfast Port as a Trust port and the implementation of the extend powers agreed by the Assembly in 2001;
- The Declassification from public corporation status; and
- Maintaining the integrity of the Ports Harbour Estate.

Key to Abbreviations

DRD – Department of Regional Development
NI – Northern Ireland

Documents Attached

- Appendix 1.1: Consultation Response.**
Appendix 1.2: 'Submission I and II to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Ad-Hoc Committee Port of Belfast in 1999'
Appendix 1.3: A case study of Dover Trust Port."

During discussion in the matter, it was pointed out that it would be vital for the Port to be declassified as a Public Corporation, since, if it remained classified, it would have to compete for funding with other public bodies, which might hinder proposed development plans for the Port.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to the recommendations contained within the response, which indicated that the Belfast Harbour should remain as a Trust Port, that it should have extended powers as had been agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2001, that it be declassified from Public Corporation status and that the Port and its lands remain as an integrated unit. The Committee agreed also that the submission be amended to indicate that the Council wished the question to be clarified as to the degree of allegiance which was owed to the Belfast Harbour Commission by those Councillors appointed by the Council to represent it thereon.

De-designation of Laganside Corporation

The Committee considered a report regarding the de-designation of Laganside, a copy of which, with the exception of the Appendix 1 referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

"Relevant Background Information

The Laganside Corporation was set up in 1989 to secure the regeneration of its designated area. In February 2005 the Department of Social Development Minister announced the de-designation of the Corporation by March 2007. Its legacy he felt could be best secured by maintaining the Laganside estates under the management of a single body and he considered Belfast City Council to be the most appropriate body. In December 2005 the Department of Social Development presented the Council with a set of proposals on the transfer of functions and assets of Laganside post March 2007. At a special meeting of the Development Committee on 16th March 2006, Members considered a number of options and agreed in principle to the development of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Social Development and Belfast City Council agreeing the intention of transfer subject to a full and robust due-diligence process. The Department of Social Development have now responded to this decision (Appendix 1).

Key Issues

The letter from the Department of Social Development indicates that it is still their intention to transfer functions/assets to the Council in the longer term. However, the letter argues that current legislative provision and the timeframe does not allow them to do so by March 2007 and, in consequence, they will become the 'recipient body' of Laganside at that time. The letter further proposes that a Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) should be developed between the Department of Social Development and Belfast City Council to deliver a range of services including maintenance of walkways, and potentially the weir, Lookout, managed workspace and cultural, arts and community support activities.

Finally, the letter deals with the issue of 'development receipts' and suggests that Belfast City Council should 'submit views' on the matter.

Committee at its meeting in March 2006 made clear its view that the timeline enacted by the Department of Social Development for de-designation of Laganside was always too short.

The inability to carry out a full and proper due-diligence exercise influenced strongly the Committee's decision to seek a process, which led directly to this being achieved. It would now appear that the legislative position would never have allowed the transfer in the timeframe of the correspondence. The letter indicates that the Department of Social Development intend to proceed as the recipient body, which leaves a number of issues still unresolved:

1. The legacy of Laganside is not fully protected in this situation as there are no guarantees that the estate will remain intact after March 2007.
2. The question of a SDA has yet to be fully explored and a due-diligence exercise would still need to take place in relation to any undertaking of functions/services by Council.
3. The process of the Review of Public Administration is now growing pace and must be factored into the discussion in relation to potential transfer of the Department of Social Development's functions.
4. The role of Council as a Champion for the City is not recognised in a process where we are asked to 'submit views' on the question of development receipts.

Committee now needs to satisfy itself that the process outlined by the Department of Social Development is one which will guarantee the 'legacy of Laganside' for the City of Belfast. Clearly the letter does not give strong assurances about this and Committee may wish to consider a much more robust process in relation to communication and negotiation with the Department of Social Development on the way forward.

Resource Implications

None specifically at present, though major if Laganside was to be transferred.

Recommendations

Members should consider the letter from the Department of Social Development and:

1. Express its dissatisfaction on the progress in relation to Laganside de-designation.
2. Request the initiation of talks with the Department of Social Development on the future of the Laganside legacy in relation to de-designation and the Review of Public Administration immediately.
3. Reiterate its view that any functional transfer even on service provision should still be subject to the due-diligence process.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Letter from the Department of Social Development."

The Director of Development informed the Committee that, subsequent to the papers having been circulated, she had been advised that, rather than being de-designated, the Laganside Corporation would be dissolved.

The Committee agreed that a response, as indicated in the report, be issued to the Department for Social Development and that, in addition, the Permanent Secretary of the Department be requested to meet with an All-Party deputation from the Committee regarding the question as to whether the proper procedure for the Laganside Corporation should be de-designation or dissolution and the future responsibility for the assets of the Corporation.

**North Foreshore – Community Consultation on the
Development of the Giants Park**

The Director reminded the Committee that community consultation had been undertaken earlier in the year regarding the development of a portion of the North Foreshore Site as the Giants Park.

She informed the Committee that in August the Council had been awarded £250,000 from the Big Lottery Living Landmarks Fund in order to progress the Giants Park scheme to the next stage, which might result in the Council obtaining £25 million from the Fund to develop the Park. She explained that, as part of the next phase of that submission, the Council would be required to undertake considerable consultation regarding the project and that a report in the matter would be submitted to a future meeting.

Celebrate Belfast – Progress Report

The Committee noted the progress which had been achieved in relation to the Celebrate Belfast Initiative. In addition, the Committee authorised expenditure of £5,000 for the production of a television programme in connection with the Circuit of Ireland Retrospective Trial 2006 which would be held in the City from 6th to 8th October.

**Renewing the Routes – Draft Integrated
Development Fund Plans and Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report regarding the Renewing the Routes Initiative:

“Relevant Background Information

At the Development Committee meeting of 18 August 2006 the key issues and themes identified through the initial scoping activity for the draft regeneration plans for the Shankill and Springfield Road areas were presented for consideration as the basis for the development of the Draft plans required for submission to DSD.

In parallel with the work on IDF the development and implementation of initiatives has continued in other areas. The potential for further regeneration activity in the Antrim and York Road nodes, in partnership with Urban II, has recently arisen as part of a review of the ongoing initiative whilst the ongoing consultation and development work for the Crumlin Road area has identified additional specific projects for consideration by this Committee.

Key Issues

Members are reminded that the IDF and Belfast City Council allocations for the capital for expenditure to March 2009 are £815,000 (Shankill) and £415,000 (Upper Springfield). The budgets for the specific areas were established in the original IDF application in 2004.

Shankill Road: The plan for the Shankill Road will cover the area from Peter's Hill to Woodvale Road, beyond the Ballygomartin Road junction (past Bray Street). The key issues emerging from the scoping work for the Shankill Road were identified as:

- Commercial improvements, focusing on the core shopping area
- Identifying and improving gateway sites and junctions
- Enhancing buildings with some architectural value
- Undertaking targeted environmental improvements.
- As previously noted, £100,000 of the £815,000 allocation has been committed from Brighter Belfast. This money needs to be spent by March 2007. It is proposed that this be used to support a shop frontage improvement scheme in the Woodvale area.

Springfield Road: The pilot plan for Upper Springfield will cover the area from Belfield Heights to West Circular Road comprising the existing node with a small extension.

- The key issues for the Springfield Road were identified as:
- Public realm works to improve access and reinforce the area as the economic and social hub.
- Enhancement of open space landscaping, lighting and public art.
- Commercial improvements, building on existing shop frontage improvement scheme.
- Following the presentation of the potential work themes to the previous Committee the emphasis has been on the prioritisation and refinement of the key issues into potential projects and estimated budgets. This information, along with all supplementary supporting information has been integrated into the Draft plans for the area. The project recommendations arising from this work are appended to this report for consideration by this Committee (Appendix 1) - Shankill Road and (Appendix 2) – Upper Springfield).

Committee previously approved a Draft Plan for the Crumlin Road area that included a range of potential activities as the basis for project development and implementation. The ongoing consultation and development work for this area has identified

additional public art projects within the node as identified in the Plan for the area. The update on the existing activities and the potential additional works are appended for approval by Committee (Appendix 3).

The potential for further regeneration activity in the Antrim and York Road nodes in partnership with Urban II has recently arisen as part of a review of the ongoing initiative. The work in these two areas has continued as a partnership with Urban II which has seen the Council allocation of funding from Brighter Belfast complemented with an additional £300,000. Urban II have indicated that there may be the opportunity to increase their proportion of funding on the basis that the additional resources are utilised for regeneration activities within the scope of the work previously identified for Renewing the Routes activity.

This opportunity, if confirmed, would facilitate a revaluation of the potential for further activity in the two identified nodes for the expenditure of additional resources. The increase in the proportion of funding from Urban II would require the Council to maintain the commitment to the match funding of £100,000. This process could be facilitated by Council reviewing the Renewing the Routes expenditure within the two nodes to consider where the proportion of projects funding from Urban could be increased. On the basis of the potential for increased support from Urban II and an increase in the potential budget for the Antrim and York Road nodes Committee approval is sought for the review and reallocation of project expenditure in these areas. Any increase in the available funding for the areas will be reported back to this Committee for information and prior to the approval of additional regeneration projects utilising such resources.

Resource Implications

Financial

The IDF application value is £4,063,750 comprising £265,750 revenue and £3,798,000 capital.

Human Resources

A report on the staffing implications of this work was previously considered by Committee.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Endorse the draft regeneration plans and outline budgets for the Shankill and Upper Springfield Road areas as a basis for project development and implementation as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively
- Approve the allocation of the £100,000 from Brighter Belfast to the Woodvale commercial properties, as detailed in Appendix 1.
- Note the progress on the implementation of projects on Crumlin Road and approve the additional public art projects identified in Appendix 3.
- Approve the review and reallocation of project expenditure in the Antrim and York Road areas on the basis of the potential for increased support from Urban II.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Project Recommendations Shankill Road
Appendix 2 Project Recommendations Upper Springfield Road
Appendix 3 Update on existing activities.

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APPENDIX 1

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APPENDIX 2

Development of IDF regeneration plan for the Springfield Road area - overview of process

Stage one

To date initial discussions and the scoping work have taken place with elected members and other community and statutory representatives. The initial work by Renewing the Routes led to the establishment of an informal steering group and sub-groups. This has been carried out in partnership with the West Belfast Partnership Board and the Upper Springfield Development Trust. The sub-groups cover a broad range of activities and issues many of which do not fall within the criteria set for IDF spend.

Stage two

Account was taken of a number of parameters which dictated the scale and nature of works that could be carried out. These included:

Programme timeframe

This is a three year programme running from April 2006-March 2009.

Eligible activity

The following range of actions was endorsed as eligible activity in the letter of offer from DSD:

- Identification and development of open space
- Development of public art initiatives
- Removal and repainting of murals
- Enhanced cleansing services
- Identification of additional sites for recycling activity
- Improved street furniture
- Landscaping and site enclosure works
- Enhanced lighting schemes
- Shop frontage improvement works
- Transport initiatives, including traffic management.

Budget available

The budget available for works in this designated area is £415,000. This is made up as follows:

- £300,000 for existing arterial routes nodes– funded by IDF
- £230,920 per kilometre of extension area (in this case half a kilometre beyond the existing arterial routes node boundary, i.e. £115,000) – funded by Integrated Development Fund

One important premise that was accepted by those engaged in the development of the plan was that the funding available should not be used to duplicate or replace activity that was already planned or that fell within the service provision remit of another statutory body.

The list of projects considered at this stage is attached ('Proposed physical regeneration projects – Springfield Road'). Against each project, initial assessments were made in relation to the key issues to be considered as well as which complementary schemes could enhance or maximise the impact of individual projects.

Stage three

The final stage involved combining the potential projects into a package of priority schemes that fitted within the above framework and which, it was considered, would demonstrate maximum return for investment.

The list of priority schemes is appended ('short-listed projects recommended for inclusion in draft regeneration plan for the area').

It is proposed that this list, in conjunction with appropriate outputs, monitoring and evaluation details and management arrangements, be submitted to DSD as Belfast City Council's priority list of schemes for the IDF work in the Springfield Road area.

The funding allocations against each theme and each priority scheme are, at this stage, estimates and should be taken as indicative costs for the further development of projects and refinement in relation to the submission to DSD. The draft report provides the full context for the area and for project selection.

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APPENDIX 3

CRUMLIN ROAD UPDATE:
IMPLEMENTATION AND POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

UPDATE

Since the Development Committee approval of the draft plan for lower Crumlin, in October 2005, the project development work, in relation to the agreed total budget allocation of £100,000, has continued with the local steering group. Progress on the originally prioritised schemes is set out below and in the following table with the associated budget:

St Mary's Church of Ireland

Consultation with the local steering group identified the open space including the memorial garden at St Mary's as a priority project. It is currently the only area of formal open space on this part of the road and would benefit from environmental improvements. Landscape proposals are currently being developed to enhance the space. The plan will include soft and hard landscaping which will create a focal point at the existing memorial. The scheme also includes railing restoration around the boundary of the open space and up-lighting to the church. The lighting element of the scheme has already been completed, with the railings and landscaping to be implemented by December 2006.

Crumlin Presbyterian

The Presbyterian Church was also highlighted as a building of architectural merit that would benefit from being enhanced as part of the environmental improvements on the Crumlin Road. Façade up-lighting to church and repainting and restoration of railings were identified as having the greatest potential impact for the area. The lighting element has been implemented and the railing restoration is due for completion by December 2006.

Shop frontage Improvements

Improvements to shop fronts were identified as a key priority along the Crumlin Road. Two blocks of shops have been identified for enhancements 155-191 and 229-243. It was agreed that the main focus for shop front improvements would be the block 229-243 and the block at 155-191 should be prioritised for future funding. The improvements are to include replacement signage, enhanced detailing, lighting and replacement windows.

<u>Projects</u>	<u>Indicative Budget</u>
<u>St Mary's</u>	
Including re-design of memorial garden, additional planting, clearance of overgrown shrubs, creation of hard landscaping at memorial, railing restoration and enhanced lighting	£45,000
<u>Crumlin Presbyterian</u>	
Façade lighting to church and repainting and restoration of railings	£15,000
<u>Shop frontage Improvements</u>	
Cosmetic enhancement scheme for the commercial premises, to include potential for improved shop fronts, replacement signage, enhanced detailing, lighting and replacement windows.	£25,000

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

The original Regeneration Plan for the area identified the opportunity for public art projects within the node. As part of the ongoing consultation and development work in this area the potential for two public art projects was identified in relation to prominent statutory and community buildings. The proposed projects have been developed in consultation with the building occupiers and the Council's resident artist and would see the establishment of public art pieces on the Health Centre at 132 Crumlin Road and the Vine Centre 193 Crumlin Road.

Health Centre

The lower Crumlin Regeneration Plan highlighted the Health Centre as a building that had the potential for a more positive impact on the environment of the Crumlin Road. An arts project has been developed for the 60m boundary railings, it is hoped that this will provide animation to this part of the road and complement potential activity or improvements at the Crumlin Road Gaol.

Vine Centre & Bulrush

As a focal point for the local community the Vine Centre was highlighted as a possible site for a public art project. The project proposed would enhance the gable wall facing Century Street working in partnership with the local community groups that are based in the Vine Centre.

<u>Proposed Projects</u>	<u>Indicative Budget</u>
Health Centre	
Graphics incorporating art into the existing railings along the Crumlin Road frontage.	£5,000
Vine Centre & Bulrush	
Installation of sculptural artwork pieces on the gable of the Vine Centre and at the entrance to the Childcare Centre."	£10,000

Following discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the report and associated appendices.

Review of the Regional Development Strategy

The Committee considered a report regarding the above mentioned matter, a copy of which, with the exception of the Appendix 1 referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Relevant Background Information

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) was published in September 2001 as the long term spatial plan for Northern Ireland to 2025. The RDS contained a commitment to carry out a review after 5 years to address areas where adjustments may be required for the Strategic Planning Guidelines.

It is stated that the first 5 year review is limited in scope and has a focus on the need for adjustments rather than whether major changes of direction are required. This will be considered in the proposed 2010 review.

The following process was carried out by the review:

- advice from an External Working Group;
- bi-lateral discussions with government Departments; and
- monitoring work on implementation of the RDS.

One of the most visible elements of the RDS is the Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) for the District Councils outlined in the context of the Spatial Development Strategy. In 2001 the RDS established a regional housing requirement of 160,000 additional dwellings between 1998 and 2015. The RDS included a commitment to update the Regional housing need assessment after 5 years. This review of the RDS housing figures has taken place with the formal Examination In Public into the Review was held between the 14th and 17th February 2006.

The outcome of the review and statistical analysis was an uplift in the housing growth figures for Northern Ireland as a whole to 208,000 to take account of the Government Actuary Department 2004 forecasts. The additional dwellings arising from the forecasts and the EIP are proposed to be distributed on the basis of 99,800 to the Belfast Metropolitan Area and Hinterland and 108,200 to the North, South and West.

Key Issues

A draft response is appended (Appendix 1) and the key issues of the update of the BMAP process are summarised below:

The Spatial Development Strategy will as the whole remain unchanged on the basis that the external working group has concluded that it continues to be an appropriate guide for development of the region.

The Examination in Public into the Review of the RDS housing figures endorsed the use of the Spatial Development Strategy as the primary driver of housing allocations across the region

The Review states that the regional brownfield target of 60% has been exceeded for the years 2001-2004. The 60% figure will remain the target up to the 2010 review when the target will be reconsidered. However, at this point the Department proposes to roll forward the 60% target up to 2015. It is the Council's view that issues remain in relation to the conformity of Development Plans where there are differences between the Draft BMAP and RDS definitions of brownfield sites and the potential for inaccuracies in the monitoring information.

Affordable housing is highlighted as an important issue and the review states that research has been commissioned from the University of Ulster and the University of Glasgow to consider how planning and housing systems can more effectively work together. The Council are concerned that no mechanism for the provision of affordable housing is outlined at this stage.

The review states that the change in economic circumstances has created the need to reconsider the Strategic Employment Locations concept in the RDS. The review states that the government will continue to consider how to assess the amount of land required for industrial use and the most appropriate locations, taking account of any proposals put forward by District councils. Draft BMAP refers to major employment locations however the Council request clarification on the definition of MEL's to be considered in the review.

The Review proposes changes to the Strategic Planning Guidelines for Waste. It is the Council's view that the guidelines should be strengthened to ensure that development plans consider waste management facilities as an essential part of infrastructure/ land use zoning and greater consideration is given to Council's waste management strategies. The response also requests for adjustments to strengthen policy under air quality and clarification on data used for building types.

Recommendations

Members are asked:

- To consider the content of the draft response to the RDS 5 Year Review as set out in Appendix 1 and agree this as an appropriate response for submission to the Department of Regional Development by the 29th September 2006.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Draft Response."

The Director informed the Committee that, subsequent to the papers having been circulated, the Director of Health and Environmental Services had requested that a paragraph within the draft response under the Waste heading be removed. The Committee agreed to this omission and noted that a copy of the draft response was available for inspection in the Member's Library.

During discussion in the matter, a Member expressed concern that work which fell within the remit of the Development Committee was being considered by other Committees. In response, the Director of Development undertook to investigate the issues raised by the Member and to submit a report to a future meeting.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that the draft response, as amended at the request of the Director of Health and Environmental Services, be submitted to the Department of Regional Development as the Council's response to the Regional Development Strategy.

Response to the "Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015" Consultation Document

The Committee considered a draft response to the "Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015" consultation document, which detailed the additional strategic road improvement schemes which were proposed under the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Council's response indicated that, whilst it accepted that the strategic road network was important to the economy of Northern Ireland and that the improvements outlined were to be welcomed, it was concerned that the emphasis of the proposed investment was on road improvement only rather than public transportation generally.

Following discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed the draft response, subject to the inclusion of a request that that portion of the Shore Road/York Road nearest the City centre be improved to remove the “fracture zone” which separated North Belfast from the City centre.

Showcasing Belfast’s Retail Opportunities

British Council of Shopping Centres Conference and Retail Showcase

The Committee was reminded that the 2005 British Council of Shopping Centres Conference and Retail Showcase, which was the United Kingdom’s leading retail property event, had been held in Belfast. The 2006 Showcase would be held in Manchester from 6th till 8th November and it was proposed that the Council, together with the Department for Social Development, Investment Belfast, Belfast City Centre Management and a number of private sector retail property developers, organise a stand at the event to promote the City. The total cost of organising the stand would be £30,000, of which the Council’s contribution would be £10,000.

After discussion, the Committee approved expenditure of £10,000 as the Council’s contribution towards the provision of a stand to promote Belfast at the British Council of Shopping Centres Conference and Retail Showcase to be held in Manchester in November.

MAPIC “Shop in the City” Conference

The Director of Development informed the Committee that the 2006 MAPIC Conference would be held in Cannes from 15th – 17th November and would feature the key organisations which were involved in European retail property developments and would attract some 1,600 delegates. The event presented a marketing opportunity for Local Authorities to focus on expanding their inner city retail activity through opportunities to meet with the developers of new retail brands, property developers and investors.

The Director reported that the Conference organisers had requested that the Council submit an “Under the Spotlight” presentation of Belfast with a view to including it in the Conference Programme. She indicated that the Council, together with the Department for Social Development, Investment Belfast, Belfast City Centre Management and a number of local private sector retail property developers, believed it would be beneficial to host a reception at the MAPIC “Shop in the City” Conference, at a cost to the Council of £3,000.

After discussion, the Committee approved expenditure of £3,000 in connection with the holding of a reception at the MAPIC Conference.

**Tender for a Web-Based Neighbourhood Information System
for the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Programme**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th May, it had agreed that tenders be invited for a web-based neighbourhood information system which would assist with the introduction of the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan, in order to provide the Council with the facility to collate, interpret and present neighbourhood statistical information from a wide variety of sources.

The Director reported that two tenders had been received and that, following demonstrations and evaluations based on previously agreed criteria, it was recommended that the lowest tender received, that from Fluent Technology Limited, Queens Road, Belfast, in the sum £47,385 for the installation, licensing and maintenance of the system over a three year period, be accepted.

The Committee adopted the recommendation, subject to form of contract being prepared by the Director of Legal Services.

Arising from discussion in the matter, the Director of Development informed the Committee that a report regarding the progress which had been achieved in connection with the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Programme would be submitted to the October meeting of the Committee.

Estates Management – Appropriation of Maysfield

The Committee considered the undernoted report regarding the appropriation of land at the Maysfield site from the Community and Recreation Committee to the Development Committee:

“Relevant Background Information

Committee are requested to approve the appropriation of land and property at Maysfield from the Community and Recreation Committee to the Development Committee.

The Community and Recreation (Community and Leisure Services) Sub-Committee at its meeting on 1st August 2006 received a report in relation to the transfer of Maysfield Leisure Centre Site. The Committee agreed that the Maysfield Leisure Centre Site be transferred to the Development Committee with effect from 1st October 2006 as it is surplus to the requirements of the Community and Recreation Service.

In accordance with the Property Policy adopted by the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2002 all property which becomes non-operational is held within a corporate landbank managed by the Development Committee. A process will be undertaken detailing options for disposal, redevelopment or otherwise and further reports will be submitted to Committee in due course. However in the interim the site is to be appropriated to Development and held for the general purposes of the improvement development or future development of the district.

The Maysfield Leisure Centre building is currently solely occupied by a film company Titanic Studios under a temporary arrangement entered into by Community and Leisure Services dating back to August 2005. This arrangement has been extended several times up to 24 October 2006.

Titanic Studios through their associated company Group Intellex have requested a further extension of a minimum 12 to 18 months at nil rent. They have been finding it difficult to cover the current £1,500 per week fee and currently owe approximately £22,000 which sum has been referred to Legal Services for debt recovery.

In 2005/2006 basic running costs for Maysfield were £137,000 with income, mostly from the Titanic Studios of £69,000 leaving a deficit of £68,000.

Group Intellex have submitted a proposal for continued use which is attached as Appendix A.

Key Issues

Property Policy states that non-operational property such as Maysfield should move to a corporate landbank managed by Development.

The current use of the Leisure Centre Building by Titanic Studios is not cost neutral

Further work is required on options for the future use and development of Maysfield which will be presented in due course.

Resource Implications

Financial

Provision will have to be made to manage, secure and possibly demolish the premises pending decisions on its future.

Human Resources

This adds to the Corporate Management responsibilities of the Estates Management Unit.

Asset and Other Implications

Best practice asset management dictates that property assets must not be held unnecessarily, surplus property must be disposed of and property which is retained must be used efficiently and effectively.

Recommendations

Committee is requested to approve the appropriation of the Maysfield site from Community and Recreation Committee to Development Committee. In addition to consider whether to grant Titanic Studios further temporary use of the building bearing in mind the substantial costs being incurred at present.

Documents Attached

Appendix A – Intellex Group Proposal.”

The Director of Development advised the Committee that, earlier in the day, the Director of Legal Services had advised her that the sum of money owed to the Council by Titanic Studios in connection with its use of the Maysfield Leisure Centre building was £36,000, rather than the £22,000 figure which had been referred to in the report, and, accordingly, that the request from Titanic Studios for their continued use of the site should be refused.

Following discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed to the appropriation of the Maysfield site from the Community and Recreation Committee to the Development Committee. In addition, the Committee agreed that Titanic Studios be not permitted any further use of the building and that the Council pursue vigorously the outstanding debt.

Special Meetings

The Committee agreed that special meetings be held for the undernoted purposes:

- (i) to receive a presentation from Translink regarding the changes which had been made to the Metro system and the Company's proposals for the future development of the system;
- (ii) to undertake a visit to the Victoria Square development being undertaken by Multi Development;
- (iii) to receive a presentation regarding the research which had been undertaken by Regional Forecasts Limited in connection with population changes in Belfast; and
- (iv) to discuss the Council's proposal to erect a leisure facility on the site of the former Crumlin Road Jail and Girdwood Barracks.

The Committee agreed further, due to the importance of the work being undertaken by Regional Forecasts Limited, that all Members of Council be invited to attend the special meeting regarding the population changes in Belfast and that the Community and Recreation Committee, together with the Community and Leisure Services Sub-Committee, be invited to attend the meeting to discuss the Council's proposals for the former Crumlin Road Jail and Girdwood Barracks site.

Council Nominations to the Nomadic Trust

The Director of Development advised the Committee that the Council had been requested to nominate two representatives to the Nomadic Trust, which had been established by the Department for Social Development to oversee the development and restoration of the SS Nomadic.

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed concern at the possible financial liabilities which Members appointed to the Trust by the Council might face in the event that insufficient funding was obtained to develop and restore the vessel. In response, the Director of Development undertook to request the Director of Legal Services to investigate this matter.

The Committee agreed to appoint the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee as the Council's nominees to the Nomadic Trust, subject to the Director of Legal Services indicating that the Articles of Association of the Trust provided sufficient indemnity to those Members.

Gasworks – Cusp Plot 4 Hotel Application

In answer to a Member's question, the Director of Development advised the Committee that she would be submitting a report to the October meeting regarding the request from Cusp to construct a hotel on plot 4 of the Gasworks site.

Chairman